

GIÁ TRỊ CỦA HOẠT ĐỘNG THỰC ĐỊA ĐỐI VỚI SINH VIÊN CHUYÊN NGÀNH KINH TẾ

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Tóm tắt:

Theo như các nghiên cứu được tiến hành trên nhiều hệ thống giáo dục các nước trên thế giới như Mỹ, Anh, Úc, Niu-di-lân, hoạt động thực địa (cụ thể là các chuyến tham quan các tổ chức phi thương mại như các trường đại học, cao đẳng hay các tổ chức doanh nghiệp như các công ty, nhà máy, xí nghiệp có các hoạt động kinh doanh, sản xuất các sản phẩm và dịch vụ thương mại...) đã đem lại cơ hội kết nối một cách hiệu quả các lý thuyết trừu tượng trong các môn học về kinh tế với thực tiễn trong các tổ chức, doanh nghiệp. Do đó, hoạt động thực địa được đánh giá là hoạt động rất quan trọng trong việc giảng dạy các chuyên ngành kinh tế. Bằng phương pháp khảo sát được tiến hành trên cả đối tượng giáo viên và sinh viên tại Khoa Quản trị Kinh doanh - Du lịch, Trường Đại học Hà Nội, nghiên cứu này tập trung vào việc tìm hiểu thái độ của giáo viên và sinh viên về hoạt động này cũng như giá trị của hoạt động này đối với việc học tập và nghiên cứu của sinh viên. Kết quả cho thấy cả hai đối tượng được khảo sát đều nhất trí đây là hoạt động rất quan trọng và cần thiết cho sinh viên không chỉ trong lĩnh vực học thuật như củng cố kiến thức lý thuyết, tăng cường hiểu biết về các hoạt động thực tiễn trong doanh nghiệp, hay trên thị trường mà còn cả trong lĩnh vực quan hệ xã hội như là tác nhân củng cố mối quan hệ trong nhóm làm việc, xây dựng mạng lưới quan hệ doanh nghiệp trước khi tốt nghiệp đại học, tăng cường hiểu biết xã hội... Ngoài ra, nghiên cứu còn đề cập tới những khó khăn mà giáo viên và sinh viên có thể gặp phải khi tiến hành tổ chức hoạt động này, đồng thời đưa ra một số phương thức có thể giúp giáo viên và sinh viên tổ chức và tiến hành hoạt động thực địa hiệu quả hơn.

VALUES OF FIELD TRIPS TO BUSINESS STUDENTS

INTRODUCTION

Field trips offer the sort of enriching experience that is considered central to successful education. The definition of a field trip used in this research is taken from Krepel and Duvall (1981), "a trip arranged and undertaken for educational purposes, in which the students go to places where the materials of instruction may be observed and studied

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directly in their functional setting...” Traditional field trips usually involve a teacher directing or constructing an event to produce similar student observations and experiences. Field trips engage and even entertain students, helping to make educational experience more relevant, memorable and meaningful (Scarce, 1997). The Swiss psychologist Piaget (1964) said that 'to know an object is to act on it'. Before Jean Piaget, John Dewey an American philosopher stated, “Mere activity doesn't constitute experience. To 'learn from experience' is to make a background and forward connection between what we do to things and what we enjoy or suffer from things in consequence. Under such conditions, doing becomes a trying; an experiment with the world to find out what it is like; the undergoing becomes instruction - discovery of the connection of things” (Dewey, 1964).

Learning business subjects at not only universities but also at high schools in some education systems in the world such as the United States, United Kingdom, or Australia requires students both to deal with campus-based activities such as reading a number of related materials, attending lectures, tutorials in which students have to discuss case studies, make business presentations... and to visit to real business organizations to observe, to do interviews or to socialize with different people to collect data providing for certain research regardless of their scale. It is concluded that “field trips offer students the opportunity to learn what is involved in on-ground management, make comparisons with other management cases, and sharpen their own integrative ability, insight and judgment without actual real-life costs of being wrong. The main principles of field trips are common; (1) use of a natural environment for exploring phenomena and objects of the nature; (2) use of real scientific methods (collecting data, observation, creating hypotheses, performing experiments), (3) improve active student engagement; (4) naturally integrate knowledge and reinforce inter-disciplinary relationships, and (5) support of social learning processes (discussion, co-operative learning) (Zoldosova & Prokop, 2006).

However, there is a controversy whether each course in the business education needs field trips and whether the learning outcomes of a field trip are worth the time and money. It is true that field trips are usually necessary for successful business students? Furthermore, there are questions about the organization of the field trips and how often and in what subjects field trips should be conducted. Mirka (1970) and McKenzie et al. (1986) refer to several sources for the reason a gap exists between the educational potential of field trips and its realisation. These are (1) logistic limitations, (2) lack of

adequate teaching/learning materials, and (3) teachers' unfamiliarity with the outdoor as a learning environment. Additionally, at Faculty of Management and Tourism, it is supposed that there is another source that is (4) the willingness of teachers to support students in doing field trips in helping them to design activities or providing them initial information such as business organization contacts. It is evident from the literature that lack of curriculum design, planning and implementation in field trips often results in poor outcomes in student learning (Rahman, T. & Spafford, H. (2009)).

This paper presents the outcome of a preliminary survey, which allowed both students and teachers to express a range of opinions regarding the field trips' values and challenges in students learning to clarify its need for students' business learning, appropriate numbers, duration, and group size to conduct the field trips. Some ways to organize a short business field trip are also suggested.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The population targeted for this article was undergraduates in Finance and Banking and Business Administration Divisions in the second and third year, and teachers (academic staff) in the Faculty of Management and Tourism (FMT) at Hanoi University (HANU). To investigate the objectives of this article, two surveys were constructed: one for undergraduate students and another questionnaire for teachers. The survey consisted of both closed- and open-ended questions. Questions basically addressed the (1) value of field trips to business learning, (2) value of field trips to future career, (3) value of field trips to group cohesiveness, (4) integration of field trips within units/courses, (5) appropriate numbers of field trips per unit and of participants on a field trip as well as optimal duration of field trips, (6) support from teachers to conduct field trips, and (7) general challenges in conducting field trips.

Surveys were distributed to 95 students and all teachers in FMT in hard copies and via email. A total of 95 undergraduates, 20 teachers participated in this article (Table 1). All participants were informed about the purpose of the survey. Participation in the survey was anonymous and voluntary.

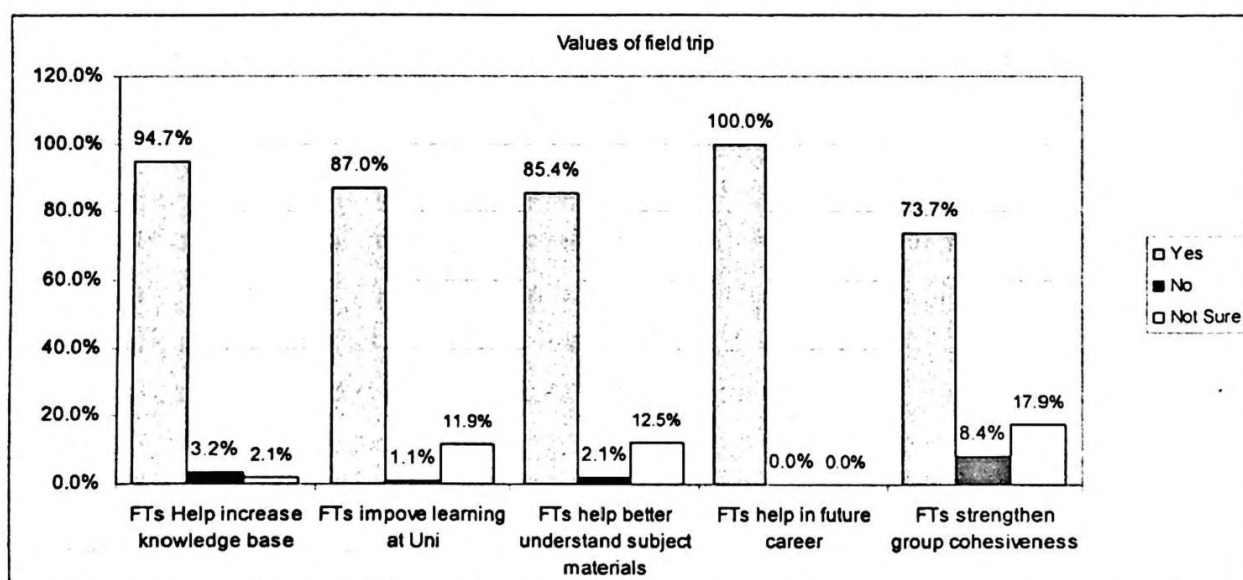
Table 1: Total numbers of participants

Participant category	Number of responses	
	Complete survey	Incomplete survey
Undergraduates	95	0
Teachers	20	0

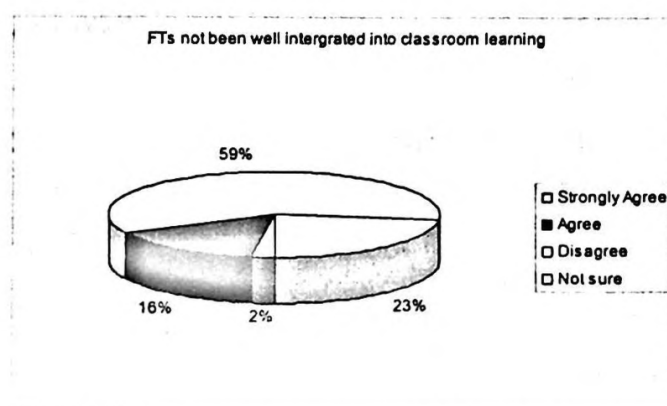
RESULTS

Student responses

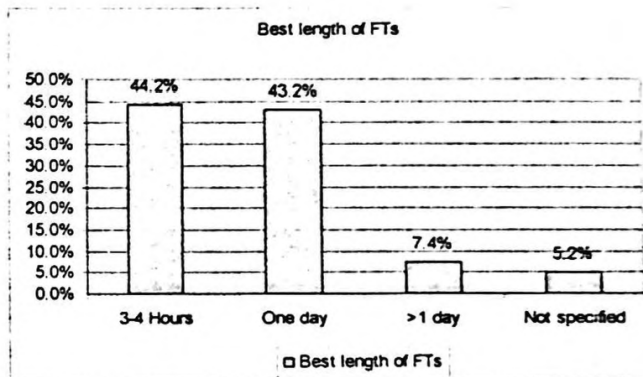
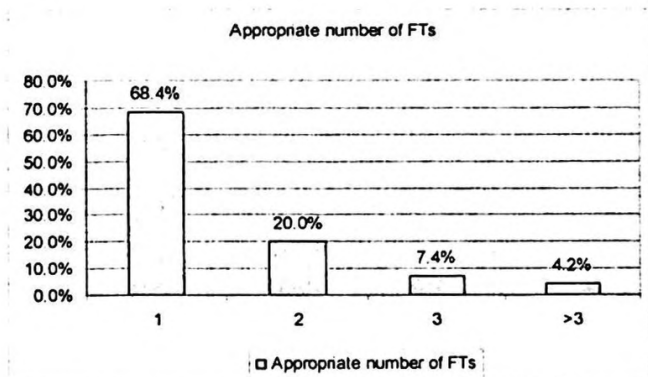
According to the result of the survey, almost all students (97%) surveyed say that field trips have helped or will help them increase their knowledge base. In a same way, a great number of students believe that field trips can help them to improve their learning at university and better understand the subject materials (87% and 85.4% respectively). Impressively, 100% students answered that their experience from field trips would help them in their future career. Not less importantly, it is also seen that up to 73.7% correspondents agree that the trips strengthen their group cohesiveness.



However, not surprisingly, it is shown from the data collected, a large proportion of the survey participants (more than 80%) found that the field trips have not been well integrated into the classroom learning at FMT. At the moment, they reported that only in some Management subjects, conducting field trips are encouraged such as Human Resource Management, Organizational Behaviors, Introduction to Management, and Marketing.



With regard to the number of field trips, appropriate size and the length of field trips, 88.4% students say that 1 or 2 field trips would be enough for 1 subject; not surprisingly 68.7% students say that three (3 group members) is the best number to go on the field trips; and over 80% of them agree that each field trip should be done in less than one day.



Very notably, 98.9% is the number of students who wish to have teacher support in conducting the field trips. They think giving consultancy before conducting the field trips and providing business contact details are the two key supportive factors from teachers. And they agree that it is not necessary that the teachers need to travel with them or involve actively in processing the facts and findings from the field trips.

On giving the answers for commons troubles, a table is used to summarize students' comments:

Table 2: Level of annoyance over field trips over different factors

Level of annoyance over field trips		
Very Annoying	Quite Annoying	Less Annoying
Unfamiliarities (No clear objectives, no pre-and-post activities, not enough information collected, lack of on-fieldtrip activities ...)	Supports (From group partners, corporate partners, and teachers...)	Logistics (References, equipment, accommodation, meals, length and number of trips, transport means....)

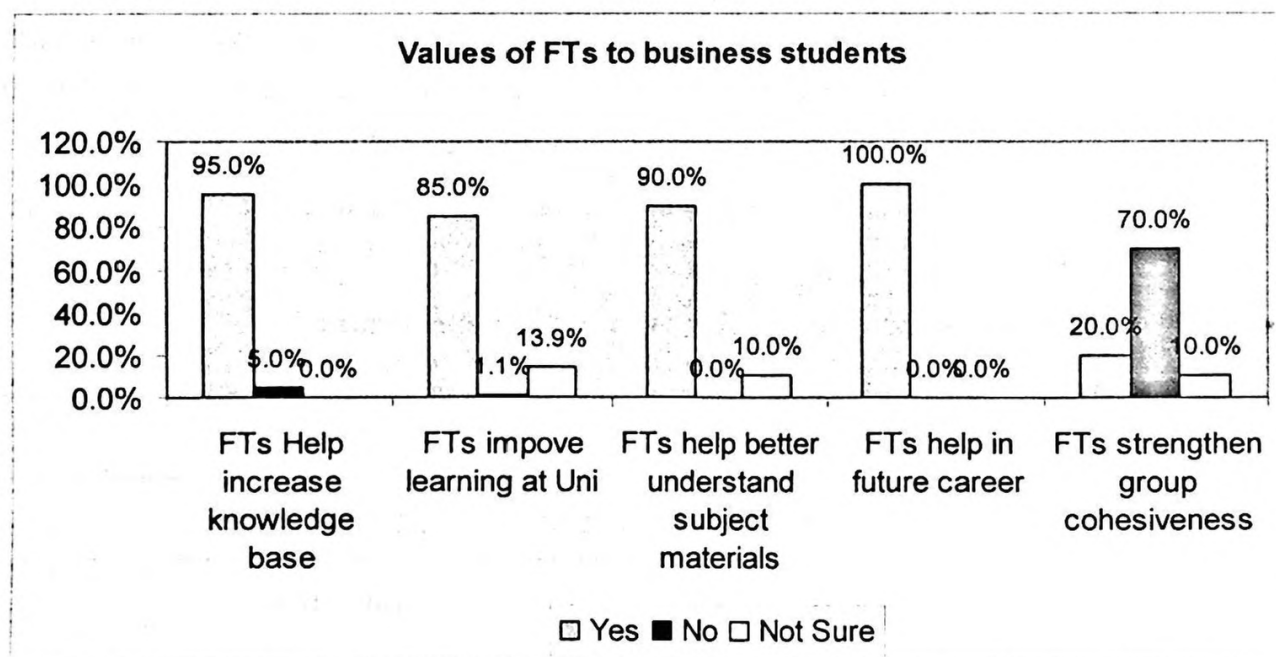
Not surprisingly, the level annoyance tends to be less problematic in the third year students than the second or first one.

Teachers' Response

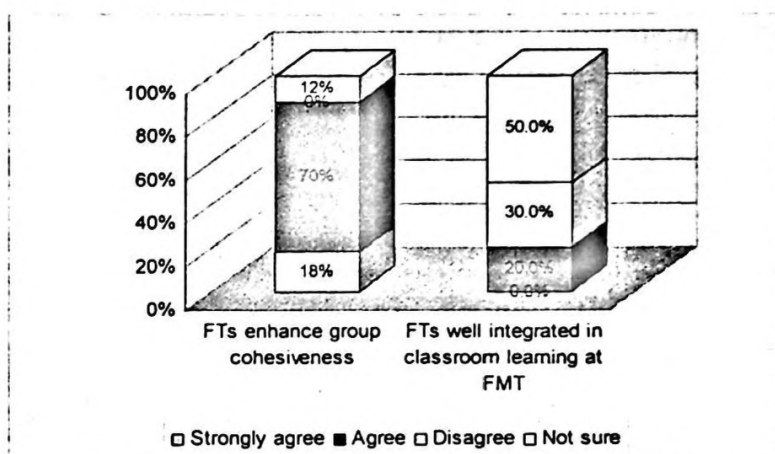
Although there are some teachers who have had no experience in field trips (15%), 92% agree suggest that students at FMT should go on field trips during their university training. The reasons for this proposal can be seen in the impressive number of 95% of them who say that field trips are necessary to increase the students' knowledge base. Moreover, almost of them say that the subject materials can be understood better by the field trips and the majority of them also think field trips would increase student confidence in the subject matter.

Interestingly, 100% of teachers at FMT believe that field trips will help students in their future career. This is one of few absolute figures collected from the teacher correspondents.

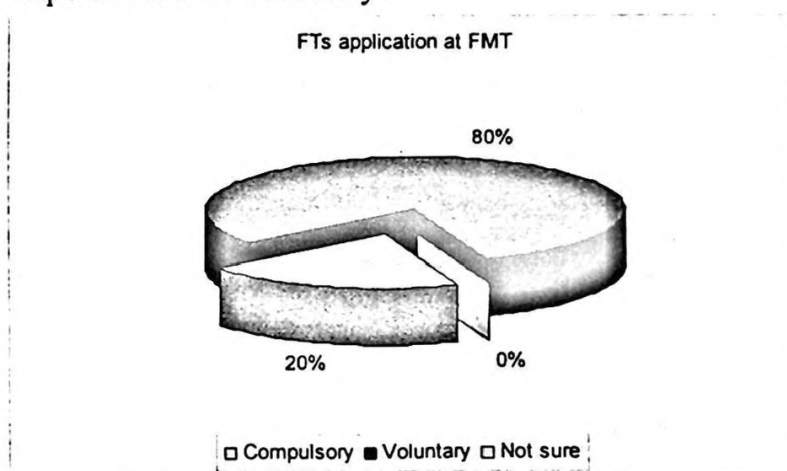
In terms of students' group cohesiveness more than 80% teachers think that will be strengthened by field trips activities. Only few of them (around 10%) are not sure.



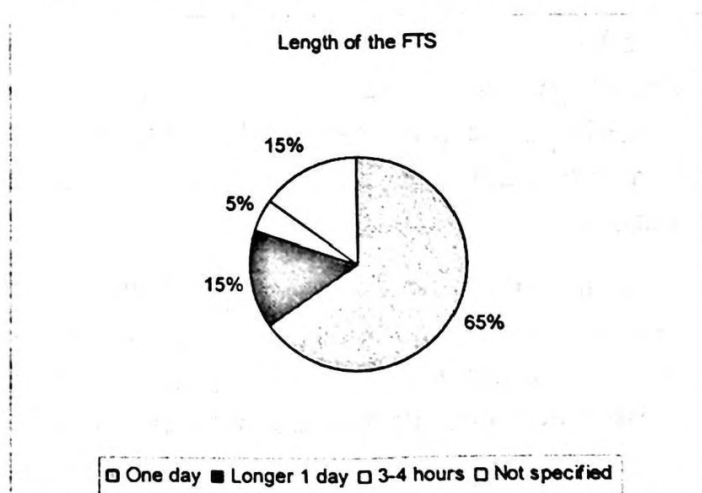
On the other hand, over 30% of teachers say that field trips have not been well integrated into our learning environment. And up to 50% of them are not sure how the field trips are applying. Only few (4) of them say that field trips have been encouraged.



However, with regard to integrating field trips into our subjects at FMT, only 20% of the teachers agree that field trips should be made compulsory while up to 80% of them suggest that field trips should be voluntary.

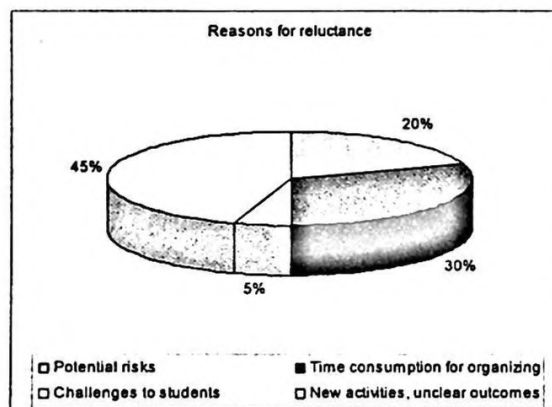


The length of the field trips does not see major conflicts amongst teachers since up to 65% teachers think one day must be spent to conduct a field trip. Only 15% of them think it should be longer than 1 day and 5% of them say that 3 or 4 hours is enough.



When answering the question on the size of student group to go on field trips, almost teachers think it should depend on the number of students assigned to do the assignments or projects in any given subjects. Impressively and importantly, 100% of teachers recommend that teachers should support students with the field trips in many different ways.

However, some factors, the teachers think, have prevented them from asking students to do the field trips. Interestingly, these factors are quite equally challenging. 45% of teachers think field trips are too new in our education system therefore they are not sure about the outcome of field trips while 20% and 30% of them respectively are afraid of potential risks happening to students during the field trips and the time requirement of field trips.



DISCUSSION

Generally, with very few exceptions, respondents on this survey considered field trips to be an important educational experience for students. Other studies have indicated that fieldwork boost student's confidence in learning subject matter and helps improve social skills (Rickinson et al., 2004). The research also showed that students are much more confident in meeting academic challenges as a result of participating in field trips (Boyle et al., 2003). Rickinson et al. (2004) stated 'fieldwork can have a positive impact on long-term memory due to the memorable nature of the fieldwork setting. Effective fieldwork and residential experience in particular, can lead to individual grown and improvements in social skills. More importantly, there can be reinforcement between the affective and the cognitive domain, with each influencing the other and providing a bridge to higher order learning'.

From this article's findings, it is also found that both teachers and students suggest field trips should be conducted to enhance students' group cohesiveness. This is a positive outcome since group work is also a matter in almost subjects delivered at FMT. In these subjects, group work is still a new activity to students especially freshmen and is short-term assignment.

Additionally, it is strongly suggested from the high proportions of agreement of teachers and students about the current situation of fieldtrips integration at FMT, field trips should be widely applied in many different subjects not only in Management subjects but also in others such as microeconomics, macroeconomics, or statistics...

Not surprisingly, the length of field trips can be varied in teachers' and students' viewpoints. Students tend to prefer shorter trips since they may encounter some problems with their traveling, accommodation, and meals even they do not really matter whereas teachers tend to be more demanding and wish for carefulness during the trips. However, majority of students and teachers think that each subject should require only 1 or 2 field trips. This is a reasonable suggestion since time is really matter at FMT.

On reaching the answers for last questions, nearly all of the students wish for their teachers' support. This is obviously easy to understand when it is admitted that 'fieldtrip' is quite a new concept for students, especially there are almost no field trips activities conducted by them in their lower levels of schools; hence, they could feel lost or not sure how to deal with sequential procedures in a field trip. The most appreciated support to them is to provide them the contacts to the business organizations they can go to because they feel reluctant and downhearted when they face with businesses that may not welcome them to be in conducting survey, asking for oral interviews or analyzing their business activities. Studies of the impact of the field trips on student learning showed that role of teachers in pre- and post field trips activities were factors that have the potential to enhance students learning (Anderson, 1999; N. Orion & Hofstein, 1994). Gennaro (1981) found that students introduced with pre-visit instruction showed greater overall knowledge acquisition from field trip, while, Anderson (1999) reported that post-visit activities associated with a field trip are more effective catalyst for continued insights in students learning. Personally, the writer thinks that this is also an effective way to bridge our Faculty to businesses at the present and in the future relationships in a way that they get to know more about our Faculty, about our workplace – oriented curriculum, about our students' work... Additionally, this may bring students themselves chances to get to know the organizations they are interested in working for after graduation.

Interestingly, all the teachers also agree that they should provide help for students by many different ways including the business contacts they have to students. It is concluded that teachers and students can meet each other in this point, however, they may not recognize about this without a systematic research.

Last but not least, since the logistic problems or health and safety are not of the students' interest, they seem to be worries of teachers. Dillon et al. (2006) also wrote 'several factors that influence outdoor learning including (1) fear and concern about health and safety'. It may be explained by the difference in each of the two group's characteristics of which youngsters tend to underestimate these problems while the older tend to overestimate them. However, the challenges of the field trips such as time demand and efforts to organize were both noticed by teachers and students. Dillon et al. (2006) also noted that several factors that influence outdoor learning namely... (2) teachers' lack of confidence in teaching outdoors, (3) curriculum requirements, (4) shortage of time, resources and support and (5) wider changes within and beyond the education sector. This may explain why a majority of both teachers and students suggest that field trips activities should be made voluntary in different subjects at FMT.

Table 3: Summary of Teachers and Students responses towards same questions

Questions	Teachers' Opinion	Students' Opinion	Generally same	Generally different
1. Students should conduct some field trips during your university schooling	V	V	V	
2. Field trips have helped/ will help students increase their knowledge base	V	V	V	
3. Field trips are necessary to improve students' learning at university	V	V	V	
4. Field trips have helped/will help students to better understand the subject materials	V	V	V	
5. Experience on field trips will be helpful in future career	V	V	V	
6. Field trips will enhance group's cohesiveness	V	V	V	
7. Field trips have been well integrated with the classroom learning	X	X	V	
8. Number of field trips	1	1	V	
9. Length of field trips	More than 1 day	Less than 1 day		X
10. Appropriate group size	Depend on Group members assigned	3		X
11. Support from teachers	V	V	V	

Table 4. Summary of Discussion

Questions	Generally same	Generally different	Discussion
1. Students should conduct some field trips during your university schooling	V	-	Consistent in attitude towards FTs
2. Field trips have helped/ will help students increase their knowledge base	V	-	FTs can boost student's confidence in learning subject matter and helps improve social skills
3. Field trips are necessary to improve students' learning at university	V	-	FTs can reinforce affective and the cognitive domain, with each influencing the other and providing a bridge to higher order learning?
4. Field trips have helped/will help students to better understand the subject materials	V	-	FTs can have a positive impact on long-term memory due to the memorable nature of the fieldwork setting
5. Experience on field trips will be helpful in future career	V	-	FTs may bring students themselves chances to study about the organizations, especially the ones they are interested in working for after graduation.
6. Field trips will enhance group's cohesiveness	V	-	This is a positive outcome since group work is also a matter in almost subjects delivered at FMT. In these subjects, group work is still a new activity to students especially freshmen and is short-term assignment.
7. Field trips have been well integrated with the classroom learning	X		FTs are exposed to challenges such as time demand and efforts to organize were both noticed by teachers and students.
8. Number of field trips	V	-	One should be enough for each subject
9. Length of field trips		X	One day is appropriate for a FT.
10. Appropriate group size		X	It can be upon the number of group.
11. FT application - Voluntary	V		Challenges of the field trips
11. Support from teachers	V	-	Problem of Miscommunication?

CONCLUSION

Field trips are strongly believed to positively influence business students generally and those at FMT particularly. This small-scale preliminary article reveals that both students and teachers at FMT expressed positive attitudes to field trips despite few different opinions about challenges of field trips. It is therefore believed that field trips are advisable in management subjects at least, then those subjects that the information can be feasibly collected by real business organizations.

However, the current findings suggest that there are several ways that teachers and students in FMT could improve the field trip experience.

Firstly, in a teacher perspective, curriculum should be well planned that clearly states the objectives, numbers and duration of field trips. It also needs to be available to students before enrolment, so that students decide whether unit/course is suitable for them. Numbers of field trips and duration may vary from unit to unit. Nevertheless, numbers and duration should be reasonable so that it would not be stressful to students (Rahman, T. & Spafford, H. (2009)).

Secondly, teacher/instructor should ensure that the teaching and learning objectives for the field trip are well articulated and supported by the field trip activities, before, during and after the trip. Anderson et al. (2006) stated that the key factors influencing the effective learning in field trips involves teachers' frequently cited effective pre-planning, appropriate curriculum and engaging/hands on experience for students as being most influential. Based on earlier studies of several workers, Orion (1993) proposed a model for the development and implementation of field trips effectively based on the following criteria,

1. A process-oriented approach focuses on an active interaction between the students and the environment.
2. A field trip as an integral part of a particular curricular unit should be placed as early as possible in the learning sequence to provide a more robust basis for understanding the abstract concepts.

In FMT situation, it is also suggested that the Faculty's Management Board and teachers should help students by developing the list of the business contacts that are open to students' field trips; and the teachers are willing to assist their students in the data

analysis process by providing them with appropriate statistical methodologies and techniques towards valuable outcomes.

In a student perspective, firstly, Anderson et al. (2006) stated that students should properly prepare for the field trips. The preparation should employ concrete activities to reduce the effect of the 'novelty space' of the outdoor event (Rahman, T. & Spafford, H. (2009)). It is also suggested that students should consider field trips serious, and then take field trips as chances to improve themselves academically by associating with the real world, with their group members, with their future workplaces. In spite of challenges when doing field trips, students should show their positive manner approaching this activity. It is positive that the benefits from this would be outstandingly significant.

Limitations and recommendations for further research

The survey was conducted by paper-based questionnaire forms to only a small number of FMT students in Business Administration and Finance and Banking fields which restricted the participation from other FMT students. Furthermore, due to time limit, the author could not reach Tourism Division's students, thus, the article ignores a very important group of target of whom the field trips are more popular. Questionnaires in the survey should be refined to be more close-ended to get more precise outcome. Extending this article to include a greater sample and using online mode of survey would provide more precise and concrete outcomes. It is hoped that teachers and administrators will take the current findings into consideration to improve the practicality of the learning environment.

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